



ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

Guidance for Places of Worship

Per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance, under all circumstances, the following precautions should be taken by *people attending places of worship*:

- [Stay home if you are sick.](#)
- Protect yourself while visiting places of worship:
 - Avoid close contact and stay at least 6 feet away from others, when feasible.
 - Wash your hands often and after leaving a place of worship with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
 - Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) and immediately throw the tissue in the trash.
 - Consider the use of a cloth face coverings, when feasible.
 - Coverings should not be placed on children less than 2 years of age, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cover without assistance.
 - If you are at [higher risk](#) for severe illness, you should avoid attending places of worship. People at higher risk for [severe illness](#) include adults 65 or older and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions.

To the extent possible, places of worship should take measures to ensure that employees, volunteers, and guests follow these guidelines.

The Arizona Department of Health Services recommends the following additional steps be taken by *places of worship*:

- Implement physical distancing precautions that maintain at least 6 feet between guests who do not live in the same household, when possible:
 - Consider spacing out seating for attendees who do not live in the same household to at least six feet apart when possible; consider limiting seating to alternate rows.
 - Consider adding additional services to the weekly schedule to manage occupancy levels and holding services and gatherings in a large, well-ventilated area or outdoors.
 - Consider whether gatherings may need to have limited attendance, be held virtually, or suspended if physical distancing is difficult.
 - This includes worship services, funerals, weddings, religious education classes, youth events, support groups, and any other events that may result in mass gatherings.



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- Continue to live-stream worship services, provide drive-in services, and separate services with extra precautions for those most vulnerable.
 - Enforce similar physical distancing requirements in employee- or volunteer-only spaces, such as dining rooms, uniform control areas, and shared office spaces.
 - Stagger the use of communal spaces and restrict common areas where people are likely to congregate and interact.
- Post signage at entrances about how to stop the spread of COVID-19, properly wash hands and practice other protective measures, as well as advising those with symptoms of illness to not enter.
- Ensure that ventilation systems of indoor spaces operate properly.
 - Increase the circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, using fans, or other methods.
- Ensure that all water systems like drinking fountains, decorative fountains, and other religious fountains are safe to use [after a prolonged facility shut down](#) to minimize the risk of [Legionnaires' disease](#) and other waterborne diseases.
- Avoid or consider suspending the use of a choir or musical ensemble during religious services or other programming, if appropriate.
 - Consider having a soloist or strictly limiting the number of choir members and keep at least 6 feet between individuals.
- Consider having clergy hold virtual visits (by phone or online) instead of inside homes or at the hospital, except for compassionate care situations, such as end of life.
- Provide adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors, including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, disinfecting wipes, tissues, and no-touch trash cans.
- Identify activities, rituals, and traditions (e.g., hand shaking/holding, sharing items, communion, etc.) that may need to be temporarily suspended or modified.
- Limit community sharing of worship materials and other items, such as worship aids, books, hymnals, bulletins, or other items passed or shared among congregants, and encourage congregants to bring their own. If possible, photocopy or project prayers, songs, and texts using electronic means.
- Modify the methods used to receive financial contributions. Consider a stationary collection box, the mail, or electronic methods of collecting regular financial contributions instead of shared collection trays or baskets.
- Implement comprehensive sanitation protocols, including sanitizing equipment before and after every use.
 - Provide disposable disinfectant wipes, cleaner, or spray to wipe down frequently touched surfaces and equipment.
 - Wipe any pens, counters, or hard surfaces between use.
 - Consider removing items that are difficult to clean.
 - Consider limiting hours to allow for proper sanitation.
- Use a system that separates the already cleaned and disinfected items from the items that need to be cleaned and disinfected.
- See additional [CDC reopening guidance](#) on cleaning and disinfecting.



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The list of EPA-approved disinfectant products for use against the virus that causes COVID-19 can be accessed [here](#).

The Arizona Department of Health Services recommends the following additional steps be taken by *staff and volunteers*:

- Document and communicate flexible sick leave policies that permit adherence with public health isolation and quarantine guidance.
- Implement symptom screening for staff and volunteers prior to the start of their shift.
- Train all staff and volunteers on appropriate cleaning and disinfection, hand hygiene, and respiratory etiquette.
- Have staff and volunteers maintain at least 6 feet separation from other individuals and ensure the use of cloth face coverings, when possible.
- Provide appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) for staff and volunteers in accordance with public health recommendations.
- Provide adequate supplies in workspaces to support healthy hygiene behaviors, including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, disinfecting wipes, tissues, and no-touch trash cans.
- Clean and disinfect shared restrooms, tables, seats, doorknobs, and gowns/robes between each use.
- Use disposable gloves while laundering clothing, gowns/robes, and other religious laundry items and, in accordance with manufacturer's instructions, use the warmest allowable water temperature and ensure items are completely dried.
 - Do not shake used laundry items.
 - Clean and disinfect bins that hold used laundry items.
 - Wash hands right away after removing gloves and handling used laundry items.
- If a place of worship provides food for employees, volunteers, or attendees, the food items should be individually packaged. Maintain rigorous sanitation practices including disinfection, handwashing, and cleanliness when preparing or serving anything edible. Avoid the use of buffets or family-style food services.
- Nurseries and childcare facilities within faith-based organizations should comply with [CDC guidelines for childcare facilities](#).

For additional guidance on places of worship, visit CDC's [Community and Faith-Based Organizations](#).

For additional guidance on cleaning, visit CDC's [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#) page and CDC's [Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes](#).

For COVID-19 questions, please call the Arizona COVID-19 Hotline at: 1-844-542-8201.